



2 Timothy 2:8-13 When Life Is Hard, Remember Jesus

Summary: Feeling discouraged? Remember the resurrection of Jesus and what it means.

We all know life is hard at times. Either we make it hard for ourselves, or others make it hard for us, but no one has it easy for very long.

So, the question is, how do you cope with hard times? How do you navigate difficulty? When someone or something is bothering you, what do you do about it?

- Are you the kind of person who lashes out?
- Are you the person who tries to control everything and everyone?
- Are you the person who pulls away and sticks to yourself?

Sometimes those things 'work.' But what if it's a big problem, a persistent or unavoidable problem and you can't change it, overpower it, or avoid it? Or, at least not all at once? What do you do with a difficult situation that won't go away?

Well, many, many years ago, in the town of Ephesus, in modern-day Turkey, a pastor named Timothy found himself in that kind of situation. Everything in life felt hard but there was no walking away and there were no quick fixes.

The apostle Paul knew Timothy was having a hard time in a hard place surrounded by difficult people. So, he wrote Timothy a letter and we've been looking at what he had to say.

Last week we noticed he gave Timothy examples of people who work hard – soldiers, athletes, and farmers and said 'Tim, think of yourself like that. Just because what you're doing is hard, doesn't mean it's wrong. These people all do hard things because they know there's a reward ahead. That's true for you too. *You just need to remember it.*'

And that's where Paul points Timothy next – *to remember the big picture.*

Pay close attention as we read and keep the context in mind – Timothy is going through some hard times, and *this* is what Paul thinks he needs to hear:

2 Timothy 2:8 Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, 9 for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, *even* to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. 10 Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

The problem with hard times is that they narrow our focus, you may have heard it called tunnel vision. It can be good thing – when we’re faced with a crisis or emergency everything else gets shut out and we devote all our attention to this one problem.

But, it can also be a bad thing because some of what we shut out might be needed to help us get through the problem. So, sometimes we need to step back and take in the whole picture again. Psychologists and therapists call it reframing. Strategists and survivalists call it reorienting yourself to the terrain. Simon Sinek popularized it as Start With Why. The Apostle Paul tells Timothy – *remember*.

You need to remember

Friends, sometimes the answer to your difficult situation is something you already know but you’ve forgotten or set aside or lost track of.

When life felt like it was caving in for Timothy Paul said he needed to remember. We’ll list some of the specific things he needed to remember in just a moment, but first let’s just notice that he needed to remember.

Remembering is a common theme in Scripture because though our circumstances may change, God does not. The things that were true about Him when life was going well are still true when life gets hard. And, the things that God has put off limits or warned us against, are still off limits or dangerous. He doesn’t flippantly change His mind and so all throughout history He has charged us to remember.



Last week we celebrated Communion. Some of you grew up in or attended a church that had a big communion table with the words This Do In Remembrance of Me on the front of it. That’s because Jesus said Communion was to remind us of Him. But it’s also a reminder of something else – the Passover when the people of Israel ate unleavened bread and smeared the blood of a sacrificed lamb over their doorposts in order to escape death and be delivered from slavery in Egypt.

Those of you who did the Turn Aside study on Exodus may remember the instructions Moses gave the people:

Exodus 12:26 And it shall be, when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’ 27 that you shall say, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice of the LORD, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households.’

In other words, Passover was not to be a one-time event, it was to be something they did every year, to remember what God had done.

And then Jesus came and presented Himself as the fulfillment of these things – He was the lamb of God who was slain for the sins of the world. The sacrifice of a four-legged lamb

brought freedom from slavery in Egypt, the sacrifice of the Lamb of God brought freedom from sin for all of eternity. Passover, which became Communion, is meant to be a regular part of our religious experience stirring our hearts and helping us remember.

Those of you doing the current Turn Aside study in Deuteronomy may remember looking



at the Shema in Deuteronomy 6 – it’s on the plaque that we give out during baby dedications and it’s the first part of what Jesus called the Great Commandment. **You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.** Well, the reason we give that plaque at baby dedications is because the Scripture says *parents* are supposed to teach these things *to their kids*. The passage then gives some specific things parents should teach and says:

Deuteronomy 6:20 “When your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What is the meaning of the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments which the LORD our God has commanded you?’ 21 then you shall say to your son: ‘We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand...

In other words, all of this was to meant to help God’s people remember and reflect.

One more example. When the people of Israel enter the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua, they’re told to gather stones from the bottom of the Jordan River and pile them up in Gilgal, to make a simple memorial.

Joshua 4:6 that this may be a sign among you when your children ask in time to come, saying, ‘What do these stones *mean* to you?’ 7 Then you shall answer them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. And these stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever.”

The stones were meant to help them remember.

What I want you to see is that from the very beginning God intentionally built triggers into life meant to help His people remember who He was and what He done for them.

Unfortunately, their memories were no better than ours, even though their lives were marked by profoundly miraculous circumstances and events.

The story of the Old Testament is really just repeated cycles of God doing great things for people who forget or ignore Him, suffer, and then eventually seek Him. So, He does great things for them and then they forget Him or ignore Him and suffer and on and on the cycle goes.

Psalms 78 captures it well:

Ps 78:10 They did not keep the covenant of God;

They refused to walk in His law,
11 And forgot His works
And His wonders that He had shown them.

We're really not much better today. In fact, the New Testament is also full of passages that point to the importance of reminders and remembering.

Paul tells the church in Corinth

1 Cor 4:17 I have sent Timothy to you ... who will **remind** you of my ways in Christ

When he writes a letter to Titus giving instruction about how to lead the church, he says

Titus 3:1 **Remind** them to be subject to rulers and authorities

And it wasn't just Paul who was obsessed with reminding people. Peter had no problem repeating himself:

2 Peter 1:12 For this reason I will not be negligent to **remind** you always of these things

Jude only wrote one short book of the Bible and it was meant to do one thing – remind people of what they already knew.

Jude 1:5 But I want to **remind** you, though you once knew this,

The word remember occurs over 160 times in Scripture. Does that tell us something? Do you remember what it is?

The point is: *life is full of things and people that will make us forget what we're supposed to remember.* We get distracted. We get overwhelmed. We wander away slowly or we get violently ambushed. It happens a thousand ways and the answer, the proper response, is always to remember.

So, what specifically do we need to remember? Well, it depends on your circumstances. But Timothy, who was dealing with difficulty in his life and ministry in Ephesus, needed to remember the resurrection first and foremost.

Remember the Resurrection

2 Timothy 2:8 Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel,

Timothy, remember, Jesus was the Christ. That's not His last name, that's His title – in Hebrew it's Messiah, in English it's Savior. And remember, He suffered – violently, horribly

and died, painfully and publicly. But then He was raised from the dead. And that's the gospel – which means good news.

Timothy, remember, *you've got nothing to lose except your life* and even if you do, God is going to give it back to you. What's the worst thing that can happen? Are you even paying attention to the message of the gospel? We worship a risen King.

Now, let's be real – remembering the resurrection doesn't make cancer hurt any less. Remembering the resurrection doesn't mean the things those people said or did don't hurt. But it takes the edge off and it gives us the hope of a better future. We endure *this*, in light of *that*, and it changes things. There is future hope. There is something over the horizon. Jesus has complete and total victory.

Christian, do *you* remember the resurrection of Jesus Christ? And if so, what affect does it have on your life's situation and circumstances?

We had a eclipse on Monday and people were staring at the sun wearing funny glasses. They had to wear to them in order to see what was happening. Well, what if the resurrection of Jesus is like your special sunglasses? Maybe you can't see really see what's going on until you look through the lens of the resurrection and then you'll be able to make sense of what is happening or at least gain the hope, peace, and confidence you need to keep going.

Now, maybe you are not a Christian. If you do not believe in Jesus, if you do not believe in a real, physical, resurrection that breaks all the laws of nature and therefore is a proper miracle – what do you believe happens when we die? What is it that gives you hope in a future state that is infinity and eternally better than this life? What kind of glasses do you use to examine your current circumstances? How would you encourage Timothy? What is your good news?

Of course, remembering the resurrection doesn't just help us look over the horizon, it's not just the hope of the resurrection *some day*, there's an impact here and now as well. Paul says Jesus is the Christ, but He is also [of the seed of David](#).

David was Israel's most famous king and this connection with Jesus does two things. First, it points to prophesy, showing that Jesus is the coming King promised so often in the Old Testament, He has royal blood. This gives Timothy confidence in Scripture – it helps him know he can believe God keeps His promises.

So, think about your life and circumstances – how does knowing that God keeps His promises affect you? Is there anything *you* need to remember? Maybe you had this strong sense that God wanted something to happen, or not happen, maybe you felt like God gave you some specific application of Scripture to your life and you're waiting for it to happen – do you remember what that was, and are you holding on to it?

The second part of being the Son of David is that it highlights His human nature. Jesus was fully God, but also fully man. He had flesh. His muscles grew tired, He slept each night. He smiled and He cried. He felt the full range of emotions. He faced temptations but was without sin. He knows what life is like and understands the pressures and pain Timothy is experiencing.

So today, if you are a Christian, your God knows what you're going through. He can relate. And He knows what He is asking of you. Think about your life, your circumstances and situation, the things that hurt or are hard, what difference does it make to know that Jesus had flesh and bones and testosterone and adrenaline and low blood sugar at times? Do you remember that, in the words of the recent commercials – He Gets Us?

This is what Timothy needs to remember. And there's more, he also needs to remember he's not alone.

Remember You're Not Alone

I want to put this to you in very simple terms – you were not made to be alone. God created you for fellowship with Him and relationships with other people. It doesn't matter how introverted or private you are, we are made for others. And so, watch this, one of the least human things to be, is persistently isolated. There's a reason why solitary confinement is the worst punishment in our prison system. And yet today we have all kinds of people who walk around 'free' but alone. Thinking they're the only one. Staying quiet, keeping struggles to themselves. Feeling isolated.

Paul tells Timothy, look at me. I'm suffering too. Timothy, you're not the only one going through hard times. You're not the only one having a bad day.

Timothy knows Paul and knows him well. They've spent time together. Timothy knows what Paul believes and what He's going through. And he knows why. And Paul tells him, it's worth it. Trust me, Timothy, it's worth it.

When Paul says (vs 9) *I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains* the word for evildoer is the same word used for the men who were crucified with Jesus on Calvary. Paul says, people are calling me names, saying things about me that aren't true. People don't understand me. And it's OK. It's worth it because I remember who Jesus is and what He has done for me.

Paul has broken out of tunnel vision. He sees the big picture. He doesn't deny what's happening right now. He doesn't deny that life is hard and he doesn't tell Timothy he's doing things wrong, he says *the key is remember what's really going on*. Remember Jesus and remember the resurrection. Remember you're not the only one, others are suffering too, but they think it's worth it.

Friends, your situation may be difficult. Your pain may be real. You might have really been mistreated, disrespected, cut off from what you deserve. God is not asking you to deny any of that and say it's not real. You may suffer [as an evildoer](#), even to point of [chains](#), like Paul – just because life is hard doesn't mean you're doing it wrong. You may be doing it just right. Maybe you just need to remember one more thing:

Remember the Big Picture

Paul says Timothy, you need remember what else is happening – people are being saved – I may be suffering, but I also see lives changing for all of eternity. Paul says (vs 10)

[10 Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.](#)

Friends, who might your suffering be affecting? And I don't mean your whining and bad attitude, I mean if you're suffering well, pushing on and pushing through, showing up and standing firm, even in when life is hard – if you're doing that, who might your faithfulness be affecting?

Maybe you're not seeing people brought to salvation, or maybe you are. But, is your endurance having a positive effect on someone else? Or maybe even a group of people? Is your gospel-powered endurance making a difference in the life of your spouse, your kids, or maybe even this country? Is God doing great things through your patience and suffering? Paul endured personal difficulty for the sake of others because He knew Christ was in it – could you?

He then points to one last piece of the big picture – the eternal reward and consequences. What do you get out of it all? Well, he says,

[11 This is a faithful saying:](#)

[For if we died with Him,
We shall also live with Him.
12 If we endure,
We shall also reign with Him.](#)

There are two halves to this passage which some scholars think may have come from an early hymn – these might be lines of an early worship song, whether that's true or not, Paul says the ideas are true.

The first two are positive reminders – if we died with Christ, and have been born again, then we shall also live with Him forever. We talk of this often when we have baptisms – that baptism symbolizes us dying with Jesus, going under the water, being buried in a sense, and then coming back up, being raised to a new life that starts now and expands to even great glory in eternity.

So, we have this new life and if we endure trials today, there are great treasures and pleasures ahead in Christ's eternal Kingdom.

But what if we don't? Well,

*If we deny Him,
He also will deny us.*

Jesus was super clear about this. He said:

Matthew 10:32 Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. 33 But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

Friends, can I be super clear for a minute? You don't want Jesus denying you. And yet, He said this for a reason. He wasn't just being hypothetical or talking to hear His own voice. It applies to someone. Does it apply to you?

Do you have a category in your thoughts about God for someone who is denied by Jesus? And what does that mean? What are the consequences of it? According to Jesus, the consequences are eternal, conscious, separation from God and the pain and suffering that brings. This is a fundamental Christian truth. If Jesus is a Savior, then He must be saving people from something. And if you deny Him, you deny that salvation, and thereby choose what He wanted to save you from.

If you persistently deny Jesus, He will persistently deny you. You can't have the Kingdom without the King. If that feels heavy, it is.

OK, so what if I've been saved but slip up or fail? Does that mean He'll deny me too? Look:

*13 If we are faithless,
He remains faithful;
He cannot deny Himself.*

Most scholars believe, and most Christians have experienced, that there is a difference between persistently denying Jesus, or always keeping Him at an arm's length, and having an oops. The classic example of this is Peter who denied Jesus three times, but it crushed him. And when Jesus resurrected from the grave, He made a point of asking Peter three times, *do you love Me* (John 21:15f)?

Sometimes we're weak and small in our faith. But He's just as faithful as ever. He cannot change. He cannot fail. He cannot deny Himself. He is a savior and He even saves people whose faith is very, very, small.

We opened by saying that we need to remember Jesus and the resurrection, we close by seeing that we need to remember Jesus is faithful.

But do you remember why we saw all this? It's because Pastor Timothy was going through some hard times. And this is what Paul thought *Pastor* Timothy needed to hear. What he needed to be reminded of. How much more then do those who may not spend as much time in prayer, or the Word, or ministry need to be reminded of these things?

So, what about you? Especially those of you going through hard things, because there are a lot of hard things happening right now.

Well, thoughts are powerful things. Your thoughts can actually make you sick or angry. If you think of a certain person, or event, it can make your heart start to race make or make your stomach start to churn. The other side is true too. If you fill your mind and your heart with truth it can calm you and lead you into a peace that passes all understanding. A therapist or meditation can actually help you lower your heart rate by focusing your mind on things that make you relax.

My friends, most of us could use a little more gospel therapy. Most of could benefit from learning and then remembering what is true. We need to remember who God is and what He has done. We need to remember the gospel message and it's promises. We need to remember the resurrection of Jesus. Remember that we're not alone. And remember the big picture - where all of this is headed.

We've spent some time doing that this morning. But you need more, because we're all prone to forget. So, how will you do it? You can spend time reading God's Word daily, maybe go back and pick up that Bible reading or listening program you were doing. Don't even worry about catching up, just pick up wherever you would be today. Maybe you need to spend some time in prayer – the weather is getting nicer – could you go for a walk at lunch or when you get home and spend some time praying about what you're facing, the load you're carrying, or seeking direction?

Here's my challenge to you – find one thing, just one thing, that's going to help you remember this week, and do it. See how God meets you and watch as He gives you strength.

Let's pray.

REMINDER: We've just done a complete relaunch of our CM program; their class ends at 1030 and you'll need your code to pick up your child.



Sermon Application and Discussion Questions

2 Timothy 2:8-13

When Life Is Hard, Remember Jesus

Summary: Feeling discouraged? Remember the resurrection of Jesus and what it means.

- How do you tend to react when life gets hard?
 - o Push harder against things and people
 - o Try to take control
 - o Withdraw into my own world
 - o Does it matter what the context is? Do you respond differently at home vs at work or when you're in control vs when you're under another authority?
- Churches often have patterns, habits, and even furniture for a reason. Did your church ever have a This Do In Remembrance of Me table? What else do you remember about previous churches? What do you think that thing or event, or way of doing things was meant to make you remember?
- Earlier Paul reminded T of his past (2 Tim 1:5, 6, and 13 for example). Now he reminds Timothy of his future. Which is more helpful for you to remember as you face difficulties, what you've already been through, or what lies ahead?
- What kind of things do you find that you need to remind yourself of regularly? What helps you remember?
- Think of at least two difficult circumstances. How does the remembering the reality of the resurrection make a difference in them?
- Think about your life and circumstances – how does knowing that God keeps His promises affect you? Is there anything that you need to remember?
- What difference does it make to know that Jesus had flesh and bones and testosterone and adrenaline and low blood sugar at times?
- How does knowing that someone else is going through difficulties make your own more bearable? Who has been a source of encouragement to you in the past or is a source right now because you're both going through similar things and relying on Jesus as you do?
- Does it seem fair that Jesus will deny those who deny Him? Why or why not?